WAVE
POLLING AND RESEARCH

Toplines: National Survey on Immigration and the Economy

This national survey of 2,000 U.S. adults was designed by Wave Polling and Research, LLC and conducted online from May 18 to May 20, 2026 by Verasight, a mixed-mode survey provider. It combines a 1,000-person nationally representative sample with a 1,000-person oversample of low-income adults (household income under $60,000). The two are integrated with a combined weight that holds low-income adults to their correct national share while drawing on the oversample for added precision. Results below show weighted percentages for the full national sample. The margin of sampling error, which accounts for the design effect, is ±2.7 percentage points (effective sample size 1,323). Some questions were asked of a random half of the sample or of a randomized experimental arm, as noted. Rows may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

2024 Trump voter classification. Trump defectors are 2024 Trump voters who now say they would vote for the Democratic candidate, would not vote, or are not sure in the 2026 generic ballot. Loyal Trump voters are 2024 Trump voters who still intend to vote Republican.

Response	Overall
Trump defectors	6%
Loyal Trump voters	32%
All other voters	61%
Unweighted N	2,000

Trump-voter defection rate: share of 2024 Trump voters who would not vote Republican in the 2026 generic ballot.

Response	Feb 2026	May 2026	Change
Would defect (vote Democratic, not vote, or unsure)	14%	16%	+2

Stability tracking

Do you approve or disapprove of the way the Trump administration is handling each of the following?

Item	Strongly approve	Somewhat approve	Somewhat disapprove	Strongly disapprove	Not sure	N
Deportations / immigration enforcement	27%	14%	10%	45%	3%	2,000
Border security	32%	16%	12%	36%	4%	2,000
The economy	13%	18%	15%	50%	4%	2,000
Tariffs and trade policy	18%	16%	14%	48%	5%	2,000
Cuts to federal spending	20%	18%	12%	44%	7%	2,000
Health care	14%	20%	14%	46%	6%	2,000

Which ONE issue will be most important to you personally when deciding how to vote in this year's midterm elections?

Response	Overall	Trump defectors	Loyal Trump
Border security	3%	3%	5%
Deportations/immigration enforcement	7%	2%	14%
The economy and inflation	43%	59%	37%
Health care	10%	10%	5%
Democracy and elections	16%	6%	6%
Crime and public safety	7%	8%	13%
Foreign policy	3%	3%	4%
Government spending and the deficit	6%	4%	11%
Something else	5%	7%	3%
Unweighted N	2,000	172	573

Thinking about the 2026 congressional elections, are you more likely or less likely to vote for a Republican candidate who voted in Congress to fund Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) without significant reforms?

Response	Overall	Trump defectors	Loyal Trump
Much more likely to vote Republican	23%	5%	66%
Somewhat more likely to vote Republican	8%	14%	17%
No effect on my vote	19%	39%	12%
Somewhat less likely to vote Republican	5%	9%	2%
Much less likely to vote Republican	39%	20%	2%
Not sure	6%	12%	1%
Unweighted N	2,000	172	573

Who do you blame MORE for the current cost of living in America? (Asked of a random half of the sample.)

Response	Overall	Trump defectors	Loyal Trump
Donald Trump and Republicans in Congress	51%	20%	13%
Joe Biden and Democrats who were in power before	25%	27%	72%
Both equally	19%	45%	12%
Neither	5%	9%	2%
Unweighted N	988	172	573

Who do you blame MORE for the current state of immigration in America? (Asked of a random half of the sample.)

Response	Overall	Trump defectors	Loyal Trump
Donald Trump and Republicans in Congress	39%	20%	13%
Joe Biden and Democrats who were in power before	34%	27%	72%
Both equally	19%	45%	12%
Neither	7%	9%	2%
Unweighted N	1,012	172	573

Temporary Protected Status (TPS)

Before today, had you seen, read, or heard anything about the government ending Temporary Protected Status (TPS) — a nearly 40-year-old program allowing people from countries facing conflict or disaster to live and work in the United States temporarily — for immigrants from countries such as Haiti and Venezuela?

Response	Overall	Trump defectors	Loyal Trump
A lot	17%	8%	18%
A little	47%	36%	52%
Nothing at all	36%	56%	30%
Unweighted N	2,000	172	573

The Trump administration recently ended Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for approximately 330,000 Haitian immigrants, which had allowed them to live and work legally in the United States. Ending TPS means members of this group can be deported. Do you think this was the right decision?

Response	Overall	Trump defectors	Loyal Trump
Definitely the right decision	17%	15%	42%
Probably the right decision	18%	25%	35%
Probably the wrong decision	18%	25%	9%
Definitely the wrong decision	32%	13%	2%
Not sure	15%	22%	12%
Unweighted N	2,000	172	573

The Trump administration recently ended Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for hundreds of thousands of immigrants, which had allowed them to live and work legally in the United States for many years. Ending TPS means members of this group can be deported. Do you think this was the right decision?

Response	Overall	Trump defectors	Loyal Trump
Definitely the right decision	18%	17%	45%
Probably the right decision	18%	23%	35%
Probably the wrong decision	18%	25%	10%
Definitely the wrong decision	35%	16%	2%
Not sure	12%	19%	9%
Unweighted N	2,000	172	573

Treatment of people affected by deportation

For each of the following people affected by deportation, how much sympathy do you feel for them?

Item	A great deal	Some	Not much	None at all	Not sure	N
Undocumented immigrants working at farms, restaurants, construction	37%	27%	15%	16%	4%	2,000
Parents of children who are U.S. citizens	49%	25%	12%	11%	4%	2,000
Spouses of U.S. citizens	48%	30%	11%	8%	3%	2,000
People who were brought to the U.S. as children	56%	24%	9%	8%	3%	2,000
Long-term residents who have lived here 10+ years	50%	27%	11%	9%	3%	2,000
Friends, neighbors, or coworkers in your own community	45%	28%	12%	10%	5%	2,000
People who recently crossed the border illegally	21%	23%	19%	34%	4%	2,000

Which comes closer to your view, even if neither is exactly right?

Response	Overall	Trump defectors	Loyal Trump
Government should not deport U.S. citizens' immediate family	21%	21%	13%
Enforce laws even if it separates U.S. citizen families	30%	27%	70%
All immigrants should have due process rights recognized	40%	34%	11%
Not sure	9%	18%	6%
Unweighted N	2,000	172	573

Which of the following policy outcomes bother you MOST about the Trump administration's current immigration enforcement? (Select up to two.)

Response	Percent
U.S. citizens and legal residents being wrongly detained or questioned	34%
Families being torn apart, including U.S. citizen children losing parents	32%
Masked federal agents and military troops in American neighborhoods	27%
Higher food prices and disruption to local businesses	22%
People being deported to countries they have no ties to	21%
None of these bother me	17%
Long-term neighbors and coworkers being taken from the community	6%

Unweighted N = 2,000. Percentages sum to more than 100% because respondents could select more than one option.

From what you have seen or heard, how would you describe the way detained immigrants are being treated by the federal government?

Response	Overall	Trump defectors	Loyal Trump
They are being treated fairly and humanely	18%	10%	47%
They are being treated fairly, but conditions could be better	19%	23%	36%
They are being treated too harshly	53%	42%	9%
Not sure	10%	25%	8%
Unweighted N	2,000	172	573

Experiment 1: Detention labels

Respondents were randomly assigned to one of three labels for the facilities used to hold people awaiting deportation — "detention facilities," "warehouses," or "detention camps" — and then asked the same concern question. The table shows the response by the label assigned.

The federal government has set up large-scale [LABEL] to hold people awaiting deportation. Does this concern you, or do you think it is a reasonable approach?

Response	Overall	"Detention facilities"	"Warehouses"	"Detention camps"
Very concerning	47%	50%	46%	46%
Somewhat concerning	17%	17%	17%	18%
Not very concerning	10%	11%	11%	9%
Not at all concerning — it is a reasonable approach	20%	17%	21%	22%
Not sure	6%	6%	6%	6%
Unweighted N	2,000	656	671	673

Breadth of immigration overreach

For each of the following immigration enforcement actions, please indicate whether you think it is an acceptable part of immigration enforcement or whether it goes too far.

Item	Acceptable	Goes too far	Not sure	N
Deporting undocumented immigrants who committed violent crimes	80%	12%	8%	2,000
Deporting undocumented immigrants with no criminal record, here many years	30%	54%	16%	2,000
Detaining U.S. citizens or legal residents during immigration raids	20%	68%	12%	2,000
Separating parents from their U.S.-born children during deportation	20%	64%	16%	2,000
Sending military troops into American neighborhoods for raids	27%	63%	10%	2,000
Ending legal protections for previously authorized immigrants	24%	60%	16%	2,000
Deporting immigrants to countries they have no connection to	21%	65%	14%	2,000

For each of the following, please indicate whether you think this is an acceptable part of immigration enforcement or whether this goes too far.

Item	Acceptable	Goes too far	Not sure	N
Domestic workers detained/deported, leaving elderly without care	29%	56%	16%	2,000
Childcare providers detained/deported, leaving families without care	30%	55%	15%	2,000
Restaurant cooks and servers detained/deported, forcing closures	32%	52%	16%	2,000
Children disappearing from your child's classroom	27%	58%	15%	2,000
Your church losing congregants or lay ministers	35%	43%	22%	2,000
Fewer homes built because construction crews lost workers	34%	48%	17%	2,000
Higher grocery prices because farm and food workers were deported	25%	60%	15%	2,000
A coworker losing work authorization and being forced out of their job	29%	55%	16%	2,000

ICE funding reallocation

If the federal government redirected some of the money currently being spent on immigration enforcement, which ONE of the following would be the best use of those funds?

Response	Overall
Hiring more local police officers	3%
Lowering health care costs and protecting Medicaid	24%
Reducing grocery and food prices	29%
A tax rebate for working families	8%
Subsidizing the cost of childcare	3%
Funding public schools	6%
Strengthening border security technology	6%
None — the government should not spend the money and reduce the overall government budget	10%
None — the money should stay with immigration enforcement	12%
Unweighted N	2,000

Economic attitudes and party trust

Which of the following economic concerns worry you the MOST right now? (Select up to two.)

Response	Percent
Grocery and food prices	54%
Wages not keeping up with prices	26%
The cost of health care	25%
Housing costs	20%
Tariffs raising costs on things I need	18%
Not having enough money for retirement	13%
Difficulty finding work	9%
Losing my job or being laid off	6%
None of these worry me	6%
The cost of child care	3%

Unweighted N = 2,000. Percentages sum to more than 100% because respondents could select more than one option.

Thinking about your own financial situation, would you say you and your family are...

Response	Overall	Trump defectors	Loyal Trump
Getting ahead financially	15%	7%	26%
Just about keeping up	54%	58%	54%
Falling behind financially	27%	26%	17%
Not sure	4%	9%	2%
Unweighted N	2,000	172	573

Which party's position are you more supportive of for the following issue — Democrats or Republicans, or neither?

Item	Democrats	Republicans	Neither	Not sure	N
The economy	38%	34%	19%	9%	2,000
Inflation and cost of living	39%	31%	21%	9%	2,000
Jobs and wages	40%	33%	19%	8%	2,000
Immigration	35%	39%	18%	8%	2,000
Border security	29%	44%	19%	8%	2,000
Deportations	35%	39%	18%	8%	2,000

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? "The Trump administration is focusing too much on deportations and not focusing enough on fixing the economy, inflation, and the rising cost of living."

Response	Overall	Trump defectors	Loyal Trump
Agree	68%	70%	27%
Disagree	22%	10%	59%
Not sure	10%	20%	14%
Unweighted N	2,000	172	573

Experiment 2: Border/crime precondition for the economic bridge

Respondents were randomly assigned to one of three versions of an "economic bridge" message and asked how much they agree with it. Arm A presented the economic-bridge argument only; Arm B led with a border/crime caveat (secure borders, deport violent criminals) before the bridge; Arm C presented the bridge first and placed the border/crime caveat at the end. The first table shows agreement with the statement by arm; the tables that follow show the post-experiment questions (asked of everyone) by the arm the respondent was assigned to.

Arm A — Economic bridge only. *"Attacks on immigrant workers go too far. We're deporting immigrant workers who pay taxes and haven't committed a crime. Meanwhile, grocery prices are skyrocketing, chaotic tariffs are raising prices on hard-working Americans, and people are losing their Medicaid coverage."*

Arm B — Border/crime caveat first, then economic bridge. *"We need secure borders, and we should deport undocumented immigrants who have committed a violent crime. But Trump goes too far. He's driving up food costs with ICE raids at restaurants and farms, deporting immigrants married to U.S. citizens, and using masked agents to take people to undisclosed locations. Instead, we should focus on lowering costs and building an economy where hard-working Americans can get ahead."*

Arm C — Economic bridge first, border/crime caveat after. *"Trump's immigration policies are driving up food costs with ICE raids at restaurants and farms, deporting immigrants married to U.S. citizens, and using masked agents to take people to undisclosed locations. We should focus on lowering costs and building an economy where hard-working Americans can get ahead — while keeping our borders secure and deporting undocumented immigrants who commit violent crimes."*

How much do you agree or disagree with the assigned economic-bridge statement?

Response	Overall	Bridge only	Border/crime caveat first	Bridge first
Strongly agree	43%	47%	42%	40%
Somewhat agree	24%	18%	25%	28%
Somewhat disagree	10%	11%	11%	9%
Strongly disagree	16%	17%	15%	15%
Not sure	7%	7%	7%	8%
Unweighted N	2,000	659	662	679

How would you describe your view of the Trump administration's current deportation policies?

Response	Overall	Bridge only	Border/crime caveat first	Bridge first
They are doing the right thing overall	23%	24%	22%	23%
They go too far in some ways but are mostly on the right track	19%	19%	17%	20%
They go too far and are causing more harm than good	52%	50%	55%	52%
Not sure	6%	6%	6%	6%
Unweighted N	2,000	659	662	679

Which comes closer to your view, even if neither is exactly right? (1) Mass deportation of immigrant workers is necessary to protect American jobs and enforce the law; (2) Mass deportation of immigrant workers is hurting the economy and raising costs for American families.

Response	Overall	Bridge only	Border/crime caveat first	Bridge first
Mass deportation is necessary to protect jobs and enforce the law	35%	34%	34%	37%
Mass deportation is hurting the economy and raising costs	53%	55%	53%	51%
Not sure	12%	12%	13%	12%
Unweighted N	2,000	659	662	679

Experiment 3: Enforcement framing

Respondents were randomly assigned to one of three framings before being asked whether the Trump administration's immigration enforcement is appropriate or goes too far. Arm D was a no-prime control; Arm E used a militarization frame; Arm F used a community/neighbors frame. The table shows the appropriate/too-far outcome by the arm the respondent was assigned to.

Arm D — Control / no prime. No framing text; respondents went straight to the appropriate/too-far question.

Arm E — Militarization frame. *"The Trump administration has deployed military troops and armed federal agents to American cities and neighborhoods to carry out immigration raids, including in Minneapolis, where soldiers were sent into residential areas and killed two people."*

Arm F — Community/neighbors frame. *"The Trump administration's deportation operation has swept up long-term residents — people who have lived in their communities for years, who work at local farms and restaurants, pay taxes, and have children who are U.S. citizens."*

Thinking about the assigned framing, do you think the Trump administration's immigration enforcement is appropriate or does it go too far?

Response	Overall	Control (no prime)	Militarization frame	Community/neighbors frame
Completely appropriate	17%	16%	19%	15%
Mostly appropriate	17%	17%	15%	18%
Goes somewhat too far	17%	20%	13%	19%
Goes much too far	49%	47%	53%	47%
Unweighted N	1,824	622	628	574

Downstream measures

The following questions were asked of all respondents after the experiments.

How much have you personally seen or heard about immigration raids and enforcement actions in your area or in cities near you?

Response	Overall
A lot	23%
Some	41%
Not much	24%
Nothing at all	12%
Unweighted N	2,000

If the 2026 election for U.S. Congress were held today, would you vote for the Democratic candidate or the Republican candidate in your district?

Response	Overall
The Democratic candidate	52%
The Republican candidate	41%
Would not vote	8%
Unweighted N	2,000

Which comes closer to your view? (1) The Trump administration's immigration enforcement is making America safer and protecting American workers; (2) The Trump administration's immigration enforcement is tearing apart families and communities while driving up costs for everyone.

Response	Overall
Enforcement is making America safer and protecting workers	34%
Enforcement is tearing apart families and driving up costs	56%
Not sure	10%
Unweighted N	2,000

Do you think the Trump administration's deportation policies will make prices and the cost of living...

Response	Overall
Go up significantly	43%
Go up a little	21%
Stay about the same	20%
Go down a little	4%
Go down significantly	4%
Not sure	8%
Unweighted N	2,000

There are an estimated 14 million undocumented immigrants living in the United States. Of those, about how many do you think should be deported?

Response	Overall
Every undocumented immigrant (14 million)	18%
Most of them (10 million)	11%
About half (7 million)	7%
Very few (1 million)	5%
Only those who committed serious crimes (~500,000)	43%
None	4%
Not sure	12%
Unweighted N	2,000

Attribution (Trump defectors only)

Which of the following are the BIGGEST reasons your opinion on the Republican Party has changed since 2024? (Select up to 3. Asked only of Trump defectors — 2024 Trump voters who now say they would vote Democratic, would not vote, or are not sure in the generic ballot.)

Response	Percent
The economy and cost of living	51%
Trump's personal conduct and rhetoric	36%
Immigration enforcement and deportation policies	24%
Tariffs and trade policy	22%
Foreign policy decisions	20%
Other	18%
Cuts to health care funding	17%
Treatment of legal immigrants and U.S. citizens in enforcement	16%
Cuts to federal workforce and agencies	11%

Unweighted N = 172. Percentages sum to more than 100% because respondents could select more than one option.

Trends since the February 2026 survey

The questions below were also asked on the national immigration survey fielded February 6–10, 2026 (n = 1,500). February figures are shown for comparison; "Change" is the May figure minus the February figure in percentage points.

Net approval of the Trump administration's handling of each issue (% approve minus % disapprove).

Item	Feb 2026	May 2026	Change
Deportations / immigration enforcement	-18	-13	+5
Border security	+4	-1	-5
The economy	-18	-34	-16
Tariffs and trade policy	-26	-28	-2
Cuts to federal spending	-16	-18	-2
Health care	-27	-26	+1

In February 2026 the economy item was worded "Jobs and the economy."

Which ONE issue will be most important to you personally when deciding how to vote in this year's midterm elections?

Response	Feb 2026	May 2026	Change
Border security	2%	3%	+1
Deportations/immigration enforcement	12%	7%	-5
The economy and inflation	40%	43%	+3
Health care	10%	10%	+0
Democracy and elections	15%	16%	+1
Crime and public safety	6%	7%	+1
Foreign policy	1%	3%	+2
Government spending and the deficit	4%	6%	+2
Something else	4%	5%	+1

In February 2026 "the economy and inflation" was offered as two separate options, "Jobs and the economy" (14%) and "Inflation and the cost of living" (26%); the February figure above combines them.

Biggest reasons your opinion of the Republican Party has changed since 2024, among Trump defectors (select up to 3).

Reason	Feb 2026	May 2026	Change
The economy and cost of living	49%	51%	+2
Trump's personal conduct and rhetoric	34%	36%	+2
Immigration enforcement and deportation policies	27%	24%	-3
Tariffs and trade policy	22%	22%	+0
Foreign policy decisions	5%	20%	+15
Other	7%	18%	+11
Cuts to health care funding	23%	17%	-6
Treatment of legal immigrants and U.S. citizens in enforcement	–	16%	–
Cuts to federal workforce and agencies	10%	11%	+1

Unweighted N: 80 Trump defectors in February, 172 in May. February also offered "ICE deployments to cities" (32%) and "Pardons and DOJ for allies" (24%), not repeated in May; "Treatment of legal immigrants and U.S. citizens" was added in May. Percentages sum to more than 100% because respondents could select more than one reason.

About Wave Polling and Research

Wave Polling and Research is a survey research and strategic consulting firm founded by G. Elliott Morris. The firm provides data-driven research and advising for clients working in politics, media, and public policy. Wave Polling and Research emphasizes methodological transparency, rigorous survey design, and a commitment to letting the data speak for itself. For more information, visit wavepolling.com.

Methodology

This survey was conducted by Wave Polling and Research. Data were collected by Verasight, a mixed-mode survey provider, from May 18 to May 20, 2026. The sample consists of 2,000 U.S. adults aged 18 and older: 1,000 in a nationally representative sample and 1,000 in an oversample of low-income respondents, defined as those with a confirmed household income under $60,000. The margin of sampling error — which accounts for the design effect and is calculated using the classical random-sampling formula — is ±3.1 percentage points for the nationally representative sample and ±3.4 points for the low-income oversample.

Recruitment and data quality

All respondents were recruited via email from the Verasight Community, composed of individuals recruited through random address-based sampling, random person-to-person text messaging, and dynamic online targeting. Community members are verified through multi-step authentication, including an SMS response from a mobile phone registered with a major U.S. carrier and within-survey technology such as Google reCAPTCHA v3; members who exhibit low-quality response behavior over time, such as straight-lining or speeding, are removed. Because respondents are never routed from one survey to another and are compensated for every invited survey, there is no incentive to answer screener questions strategically. After data collection, the Verasight team confirms that responses correspond to U.S. IP addresses, removes duplicate and non-human responses, and drops respondents who failed in-survey attention or straight-lining checks or who completed the survey in under 30% of the median completion time. Verasight is a member of the American Association for Public Opinion Research Transparency Initiative; as in any survey, unmeasured error may exist.

Weighting

The data are weighted to match the April 2026 Current Population Survey on age, race/ethnicity, sex, income (nationally representative sample only), education, region, and metropolitan status, as well as to a running three-year average of partisanship distributions from the Pew Research Center NPORS benchmarking surveys and population benchmarks of 2024 vote. To produce nationally representative estimates across all 2,000 respondents, the two samples are integrated with a combined national weight that holds low-income adults to their correct national share while pooling the full set of low-income respondents.

Definitions and comparisons

Trump defectors are 2024 Trump voters who now say they would vote Democratic, would not vote, or are unsure in the 2026 generic ballot. February 2026 figures are from a separate national survey of 1,500 U.S. adults fielded February 6–10, 2026. The crime-and-border-caveat and detention-facility-label findings come from questions randomized between respondents. Subgroup estimates — Trump defectors (172 respondents) and working-class Hispanic voters (221) — carry wider error margins and should be read as indicative.

For questions about this report or the underlying survey data, contact Wave Polling and Research at contact@wavepolling.com.